



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Drywall Sampling Analysis

Background

Consumers from more than 10 States and the District of Columbia have reported concerns related to drywall imported from China that is in their houses. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is the lead federal agency for this issue. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is working with CPSC and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), in coordination with State and local authorities, to investigate this matter.

To gather more information about Chinese drywall, ATSDR requested that EPA conduct an elemental analysis of Chinese drywall and compare it with drywall manufactured in the United States.

Analysis of Drywall Samples

With ATSDR's concurrence, two wallboard samples from Florida houses known to have been manufactured in China were selected by the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) for analysis. Additionally, four samples of U.S.-manufactured drywall were purchased by EPA from local stores in Edison, New Jersey and included in the analysis.

Prior to analysis, the thin layer of paint was scraped off of the two Chinese drywall samples for metals analysis. The paper was then separated from the solid (gypsum) material of all six drywall samples and placed into separate glass jars. The paper portions of the samples were analyzed for metals, semi volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) and formaldehyde. The gypsum samples were analyzed for metals, SVOCs, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), formaldehyde, sulfide, water soluble chlorides, total organic carbon (TOC), pH and loss on ignition (LOI).

The results of this analysis will inform additional testing by CPSC to help determine the compounds that may be affecting residents and their houses.

Results

The results of the analysis are noted below. It is important to note that the analysis included a very small sample size, and the results of this testing may not be representative of all drywall products. The analysis was conducted to identify the elemental material contained in the drywall samples and is not itself intended to establish a definitive link between the drywall and the conditions being observed in houses.

- Sulfur was detected at 83 parts per millions (ppm) and 119 ppm in the Chinese drywall samples. Sulfur was not detected in the four US-manufactured drywall samples.
- Strontium was detected at 2,570 ppm and 2,670 ppm in the Chinese drywall samples. Strontium was detected in the US-manufactured drywall at 244 ppm to 1,130 ppm. Total acid soluble sulfides were not detected in any samples.
- Iron concentrations of 1,390 ppm and 1,630 ppm were detected in the Chinese drywall samples and in the range of 841 ppm to 3,210 ppm for the US-manufactured drywall samples. Additional drywall samples will be tested to determine whether the iron is present as oxide, sulfide or sulfate.

EPA's analysis showed the presence of two organic compounds in the Chinese drywall that are associated with acrylic paints: propanoic acid, 2-methyl-, 2,2-dimethyl-1-(2-hydroxy-1-methylethyl) propyl ester at estimated concentrations of 58 ppm and 92 ppm, and propanoic acid, 2-methyl-, 3-hydroxy-2,4,4-trimethylpentyl ester at estimated concentrations of 50 ppm and 84 ppm. These compounds were not detected in the US-manufactured drywall.

EPA will continue to work with its federal and state partners to respond to this issue. EPA also is working with a multi-agency and state technical group to develop an indoor sampling protocol for use by CPSC and states to conduct indoor air testing in houses suspected of containing Chinese drywall. The group's goal is to complete the protocol by June 30, 2009.